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CENTENNIAL YEAR

1930

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"Knowledge through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the grand key that unlocks the glories and mysteries of the kingdom of heaven."—JOSEPH SMITH.

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THE GIFT OF GIFTS

ARVILLA ASHBY

THERE was lavish beauty in the home of Aristobolus. Little had the wealthy Sadducee spared in his endeavour to impress associates with his power as a wealthy man. Few things did he refrain from purchasing, if by so doing he added to his already established reputation, a greater proof of his passion for the beautiful, the unique. He had, as few could fail to see, become a slave to the ostentatious, the desire for show.

Despite the realization of his power, Aristobolus was not always at peace in his mind. One late afternoon, a few days previous to the festival of the Feast of the Passover, he paced restlessly to and fro in the spacious living room of his home.

His sandaled feet sank noiselessly into the thickly plushd rugs. His arms crossed and recrossed nervously behind his back. His head bent deep in the folds of his silken beard, partly concealing a savage scowl that covered his sallow face.

He was not the only occupant of the room. On a low, pillowy divan, a young girl was reclining. Around her fluttered a number of beautiful doves, vying with each other for her loved attention. Though she smiled occasionally at their antics, her face was unusually sad. Often, tears filled her large dark eyes and a sob tightened the muscles of her throat.

So engrossed in his own thoughts was Aristobolus, that he failed to see all this, until, glancing down at her, he perceived the smile flit across her countenance. It seemed to arrest his attention for a moment.

"You seem happy, my daughter," he said, pausing in his restless pace. "Pray what has pleased thee so, or canst thou not reveal thy happy thoughts to thy father?"

"Indeed yes, Father." Her smile deepened momentarily. "Come and sit by me. I have desired to talk to thee, and now canst thou forget thy troubles and think only of mine?"

"Aye, Aye, child. I would listen to thee at any cost. Always must thou confide in thy father."

He seated himself on the pillowy divan where his daughter had been reclining. His short thick body had lost a part of its rigid tenseness. The stern, scowling expression of his face, the fiery hardness of his eyes, vanished when he spoke to Herodia. In their stead had crept the kindly light of love.

He silently watched his beautiful daughter shoo away her birds. Beautiful she was. More lovely features than hers could not have come from brush of famed painter. Her dark, glossy hair hung in ringlets around her oval, olive tinted face. Her full red lips pursed to kiss one lingering dove; her eyes glowed brightly; her soft white neck gleamed with costly jewels. Save for the sandals and stockings which adorned her feet, a white sleeveless gown, caught at the waist by a girdle, constituted her apparel.

Though the father's countenance shone with pride as he gazed at her lovely face, so it dimmed with sorrow, with tender compassion, as he glanced at her twisted body, for Herodia was a cripple.

Aristobolus placed his arm around her and drew her to him. It was then he perceived the tears lurking in her eyes. "Though thy smile remains, Herodia, thine eyes carry sorrow in their depth. Canst thou lose thy happiness so soon?"

"Nay, Father, I am still happy. Aretas has asked me to be his wife. Regardless of my twisted body, he loves me dearly, and in memory of his love I shall always rejoice. He is coming here to-night for his answer."

Herodia's voice broke slightly. She turned her face from her father's gaze, and the glistening tears dimmed her sight.

"And thy answer, Herodia, what shall it be?"

"I must tell him that I cannot be his wife."

"Dost thou not love him, Herodia? Why dost thou refuse to be his wife?" The father's voice was husky. He anticipated her answer, and it hurt him like a knife.

"Because I am a cripple, Father; that is the reason. Though I am able to walk and can do the ordinary things of life as well as anyone, I cannot become a mother. I can bear Aretas no heir to his name. You understand, Father, that I cannot marry him. To-night I shall send him from me forever—unless—unless—"

She hesitated to proceed as though there were so much doubt that it was needless to express the one tiny spark of hope.

"Unless what, Herodia?" Aristobolus' voice was eager. A silence again ensued, and he patiently waited. Finally Herodia spoke.

"Father, thou hast heard of this wonderful man, this Jesus who is performing so many cures. Perhaps I, too, am worthy of His blessings. Then I could be made whole as thou art whole."

At the mention of Jesus' name, the wealthy Sadducee's body became suddenly rigid. The scowl blackened his Jewish countenance. His eyes gleamed with a deadly hate. Forgetting himself in a sudden fit of anger, he rudely pushed Herodia from him and sprang to his feet.

"What is this ye say? What know ye of Jesus, this Nazarene?"

Herodia shrank from him as from a blow. She had seen him crazed with anger, but never had he been other than most gentle and kind to her.

She failed to answer him. "This Nazarene, I say, where hast thou heard of him?" His voice was thick with suppressed passion. His greyish curling hair and beard contrasted oddly with the angry red of his face.

"Once, only once, Father. I heard him talk to a multitude of people outside the Temple gates. How could I do else but see him for myself? All Palestine is ringing with his praise."

"All of Palestine! Yea, all of Palestine is ringing with tales of him, but not all tales of praise. The blasphemer! Death shall be his reward! The Messiah, indeed! Could such as he reign over Israel? Nay! Nay! So help me God of Israel! we shall oust him out!"

The man seemed to have forgotten his daughter. His prejudice was so great that it rendered him immune to all else but thoughts of the Nazarene and his annihilation. In his agitation he failed to note the entrance of Caiaphas, the High Priest, into the room.

Caiaphas spoke: "Rabbi Aristobolus, cease thy wanderings and greet thine old friend, Caiaphas. I beg of thee: Why art thou in such agitation this day?"

Upon perceiving Caiaphas, Aristobolus rushed precipitately to him. "O, great and learned Caiaphas, need I tell thee my troubles? Knowing the heart of Israel as thou dost know, can we be aught else but disturbed?"

"I take it your agitation is due to the presence of the Nazarene, Jesus, in the city."

"Right thou art, and what shall be the outcome of all this?"

Caiaphas seated himself as he answered. "We shall denounce him, imprison him, kill him, if needs be, to shut his blasphemous mouth." He stroked his black beard confidently. "Things are turning our way rapidly. No king of the Jews shall come as a wanton pauper of the land."

Herodia, lying quietly on the divan, was unperceived by

Caiaphas, and forgotten by her father. Once and only once had she seen Jesus. His face was more to remember, to love, and to revere, than any face she had ever beheld. An indignant red suffused her face when she heard Caiaphas and her father speak of him in the manner in which they did. She desired to shout her protests to the world.

"Have cheer, great Aristobolus." Caiaphas' deep voice filled the room. "We shall not suffer such as him to ruin our peace, to blast our hopes. Again Israel shall see her people rise and rule, and the time is near at hand. Worry ye not."

His voice suddenly assumed a business-like tone. "It is of him, the Nazarene, I have come to talk. Aristobolus, on the coming Sabbath, thou art giving alms to the poor, I presume?"

Aristobolus bowed his affirmative.

"As usual thou art giving liberally to thy family to give to the beggars at the gates of the Temple?"

Again the Rabbi bowed.

"What I ask of thee, Rabbi Aristobolus, is that thou double thine alms this day. Give to thy children more than thou art wont to give that we may frustrate this Nazarene. He has chastened us, the chosen people of God. He has said that our reward shall be no more than what we here receive. He has spoken falsely in that he promises open reward to those who give in secret. Can ye think of greater deception than his? Who is he to promise any reward when he owns not a shekel in the land? He will be at the Temple, as he has before while in Jerusalem. Give before him openly. We must oppose him in every way."

It was Caiaphas who now betrayed his agitation. He commenced the pacing where Aristobolus had ceased. In his depth of feeling, he threw his hands and pulled his long beard as he walked.

The interest was so intense between the two that neither perceived the frail, twisted form of Herodia pass from the room. When beyond the possibility of being seen by either, she quietly drew a heavy shawl over her body, almost entirely concealing her beautiful head. In her hand she gripped a necklace which a moment before had adorned her slender throat.

Quietly, Herodia passed from the stairway of her home into the courts and thence into the streets. The afternoon sun was rapidly approaching the distant horizon, casting lengthening shadows in its wake.

Clasping the shawl more closely about her face, the girl hurried on until she came to the corner of the market place. Here she stopped and peered cautiously about. The few pedestrians who were in view were hurrying along their way, and Herodia knew they had no thought of her. She passed quickly by the entrance to the market and stopped before the wasted form of an old man. Tears dimmed her eyes and a sob rose in her throat as she saw

the tattered clothes, the emaciated form, the sightless eyes of the beggar.

She stooped and gently pressed the shining necklace into his withered hand. "Take it," she said. "It is a costly jewel. Sell it and thou shalt not soon want again."

In her strange excitement, she had loosened her hold on the shawl. It fell partly to the ground, revealing for an instant her beautiful face and bent, twisted form. Rising, she hurriedly drew it over her head again. She glanced timidly about wondering if she had been perceived by anyone. Her eyes met those of a man standing near, and instantly she recognized the gentle, compassionate face of Jesus. His eyes held hers for an instant. Then slowly she bent her head, brushed away her tears and looked once more into his glowing eyes. An overpowering happiness surged like fire through her veins, and she hurried on her homeward way.

The twilight hours had made their advent before she arrived home. Aretas was waiting her presence in the spacious house-top chamber. He was leaning against the frame work of one of the four large openings to the open room. The night breezes blew softly in, slightly ruffling his dark curling hair, and the glistening stars shone brightly from the heavens reflecting their sparkle in the boy's black eyes. He turned at the sound of her step on the carpeted floor. He was a handsome son of Israel. Rather taller than the average Jew, he stood square shouldered and strong before her. His young, handsome face was ardent with love. He saw only her beautiful countenance and beautiful soul, and all else was naught to him.

Herodia, for a moment, blushed deeply at sight of him. Her heart beat heavily with suppressed love and longing. Quietly, she walked to his side and offered him her hand. He took it and pressed it softly to his lips.

"Herodia," he whispered softly, "I have come for my answer. Thou canst make me as happy as the gods to-night. Wilt thou be my wife?"

Herodia's face grew deathly pale. She drew Aretas to a divan and seated him. Standing where the light from a brazen hand lamp fell over her form, she said softly: "Aretas, behold again my miserably twisted body. Think again what thou wouldst sacrifice in choosing me for thy wife. O, Aretas, I love thee too dearly to cause thee pain in after years. No, because of my crippled condition, I cannot marry thee. Please speak of this to me no more."

Aretas only partially suppressed the groan that rose to his lips. "Herodia, don't, don't say that. Thou art dearer than all else that I might possess. Think again, Herodia, darling, for you only can I love." The strong voice quivered with pain, and kneeling, he raised the hem of Herodia's flowing garment and pressed it to his lips.

Herodia touched his black locks with her hand. Her tears fell and sparkled like diamonds in his hair. Stooping quickly, she pressed her lips to his forehead once, twice, again.

"Good-bye, Aretas, forever, good-bye." Turning, she quietly left the room, nor did she betray her sorrow until she had dropped the curtains that screened her from his view.

For some time Aretas did not move. Presently he choked back the sob that shook him and struggled to his feet. With drooping shoulders and aching heart, he trudged out into the night—hopeless, for he knew that he would never be privileged to speak of his love to Herodia again.

When Aristobolus came from his rooms where he had retired after the departure of Caiaphas, he held in his hand a large silken bag. His sons were waiting for his presence at the evening meal. All were there now excepting the beloved Herodia.

Aristobolus had long since regretted his treatment of her, and impatient to see her again, he sent a servant to request her to come to him.

When she entered, her face was drawn and pale. The happy smile of early day had gone, leaving traces of bitter tears.

With a stab at his heart strings, Aristobolus knew what had caused sadness to fall upon the heart of Herodia. He gripped his hands spasmodically as her twisted body glided across the room to his side.

"I am sorry, Father. Have I kept thee waiting long?"

"Not long, Herodia, daughter. I just arrived, myself."

After the meal was over, they returned to the house-top chamber where Herodia had parted with Aretas. Aristobolus still held the silken bag in his hand. He raised it above his head and shook it, and the clinking of the silver pieces rang loud through the room.

David, a son, called out to him: "To market, to market, Father, and what, pray, art thou intending to purchase with so much silver coin?"

"Aha, aha, purchase indeed, son. The grace of God for all of us—and the admiration of beggars, foe and friend," he added in a gloating whisper. "There are enough shekels in this bag to make any one of my children rich. On the Sabbath it shall be given to the beggars at the gates of the Temple. I shall blow my trumpet to attract those entering therein, and they shall see how freely I give. God can not hold His reward for such gifts as these. The Nazarene shall see how much in him we believe. David, Solomns, Jethro and Herodia, ye shall each receive a portion to-night. Together we shall win praise for our gifts. To-morrow eve begins the Sabbath, and the following morning thousands shall be made to envy thee."

He thrust his large hand into the bag and drew forth coin after coin. Four smaller silken bags he filled and handed them one by

one to his four children. When he raised his own, it was heavy with the contents therein.

Herodia silently took her bag and turning it over in her hand, gazed long at it. The gentle countenance of Jesus rose before her. She saw his tender smile, his glowing eyes and heard him say again: "Give in secret and I shall reward ye openly." Give in secret, give in secret, seemed to ring like bells through her heart. Tightly she clasped the bag to her, bade her father and brothers good-night and hurried to her room. There she threw herself upon her luxurious bed and wept bitterly.

"He is the Messiah, I know. He could straighten this miserable body of mine with one glance of his glorious eyes. O, Father, why canst thou not see his power and glory as it is revealed to less than thee? Why dost thou so abhor his name? To defy him, thou art willing to resort to any means. Well, I am not, and to-morrow I shall distribute my money in secret to those in need."

Early morning found Herodia hurrying across the terrace and down the stairway of her home. Her father and brothers were still sleeping. The servants, who were astir, noticed her not in their early morning rush. Her faithful maid walked with her until they reached the outer gate of the court.

Herodia spoke: "Remember, Prisca, meet me here an hour before noon-time and do not forget, if Father enquires about me, to tell him that I am sleeping soundly, and for that reason you cared not to waken me."

The world was bathed in the beauty of early morning. Though near at hand, the sun had not yet risen. Brilliant rose-coloured clouds glowed warmly in the sky dispelling the gloom of night. Birds sang happily; gentle breezes played with the folds of the girl's robes, and Herodia reveled in the glory of the dawn.

When she presented her gift to the first beggar, she felt a song rise in her throat. When, at length, her last shekel was gone and she saw the grateful look from its receiver, her heart fairly throbbled with joy—so much that tears gleamed in her eyes and her lips entered a prayer.

The Sabbath day found the usual throng of people proceeding to the Temple. Maimed, blind, wealthy, poor, meek and lowly entered therein.

Aristobolus, with his four children, stood at the entrance. He was loudly proclaiming his mission there by means of a trumpet which he held. Each time that he or one of his children dropped a silver piece into the outstretched hand of a beggar, the trumpet shrilly announced the act. The pauper class gathered around him.

(Continued on page 891)

A HEART full of truth is far better than a head full of facts.

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 25, 1930

EDITORIAL

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!

THE DECLARATION OF JESUS

JESUS stood, a prisoner, before His enemies. His day on earth was ending.

Caiaphas, the high priest, seeking evidence with which to condemn Jesus, asked, "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" There was no hesitation in the answer, "I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

A little later, Jesus stood before Pilate who had received false word from the priests that Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews. Pilate asked, "Art thou a King, then?" Equally certain was the answer, "Thou sayest that I am a King," but He explained, "My Kingdom is not of this world."

The puzzled Pilate, sympathetic with this sinless man, probed further, "What hast thou done?" Jesus answered clearly, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice." Pilate was only puzzled the more. To teach truth was no crime; especially since in his philosophy full truth was unattainable. So with half a sneer he said, "What is truth?" and went out to declare to the Jews that he could find "no fault" in him.

These are the two claims of Jesus, the Christ, whose birth into the world is being celebrated to-day in all Christian lands: That He is the Son of God, entrusted with a special mission for the salvation of mankind, and that His message is simply one of truth, all encompassing truth.

All men are sons of God, through the lineage of Adam, but Jesus is the Only Begotten of the Father in the flesh, therefore differing from all other men. His mission is also different. He is the Mediator, Reconciler, Saviour, the great King of humanity. By His service, the eternal Plan of the Lord may be completed in behalf of every man.

Jesus is a King, the King of men; but His kingdom is not won by war and bloodshed nor held together by avarice and lust of power. His kingdom rests upon the love of man for God and his fellow-man. Earthly kings are no more in that kingdom than the beggars in the street, if their obedience to the will of the Lord is no greater. His kingdom is not of this world.

Truth is the offering of true Christianity—truth that issues from the presence of God, both through patient explorers of nature's unknown realms, and by prophets who speak as moved upon by the Holy Ghost. All truth, past, present and future, made to serve for the happiness of man, constitutes the message of Jesus, the plan of salvation for mankind. In His kingdom, truth "is the most precious thing."

Christians must accept the divine pedigree and mission of Jesus. To make of Him merely an ethical teacher is to crucify Him anew. "He spoke as one having authority." His Church must respond to all truth, and must show how truth leads to man's daily and eternal joy—the purpose of man's being.

To-day may we rejoice in our knowledge of the plan of salvation. The world, blind to full truth, drunken with its idolatry, hungers and thirsts to know, without doubt, that Jesus is the Christ, and to understand the fulness of His Gospel. Peace will come to earth, as the testimony and simple claims of Jesus before Caiaphas and Pilate are accepted by mankind.—W.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

THERE'S a song in the air!
 There's a star in the sky!
 There's a mother's deep prayer
 And a baby's low cry!
 And the star rains its fire while the Beautiful sing,
 For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King.

There's a tumult of joy
 O'er the wonderful birth,
 For the virgin's sweet boy
 Is the Lord of the earth.
 Aye! the star rains its fire and the Beautiful sing,
 For the manger of Bethlehem cradles a King.

In the light of that star
 Lie the ages imperaled;
 And that song from afar
 Has swept over the world.
 Every hearth is aflame, and the Beautiful sing
 In the homes of the nation that Jesus is King.

We rejoice in the light,
 And we echo the song
 That comes down through the night
 From the heavenly throng.
 Aye! we shout to the lovely evangel they bring,
 And we greet in His cradle our Saviour and King!

J. G. HOLLAND

TO THE MISSIONARIES AND SAINTS OF EUROPE

DEAR BRETHREN AND SISTERS:

Accept our holiday greetings! May the spirit of Christmas-tide and the New Year fill your hearts with joy and strengthen you for life's labours.

We are proud of the Latter-day Saints in Europe. The presence of the true spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ among the European Saints is amply demonstrated by their spiritual integrity and intelligent devotion to the latter-day cause. May it ever be so!

One hundred years ago, this month, the Lord said to His re-established Church, then only nine months old,

Keep all the commandments and covenants by which ye are bound; and I will cause the heavens to shake for your good, and Satan shall tremble and Zion shall rejoice upon the hills and flourish.

No prophecy has been more completely fulfilled!

A handful of faithful men and women, weak but earnest, subjected to merciless, unparalleled persecution has prospered as no other people in the century. The armour of truth has dulled every weapon of attack. The Lord has remembered His promise, and persecution has become progression.

The Church rejoices to-day. It is grateful. The Centennial Year, now closing, has been for all of us a year of thanksgiving for blessings received, for an enlightened understanding of holy things, for the daily guidance, by heavenly powers, of the Church and of every individual member, wherever located.

The future is full of promise. The Church will go forward. The steel of truth will continue to turn the sharp edge of new forms of opposition. Triumph lies ahead; triumph over sin and evil, over poverty and degradation. The banner of victory shall ever float above the Latter-day Saints.

The condition upon which this glorious future is predicated is unchanged. "Keep all my commandments." Remember the uplifting words, "I, the Lord, am bound when ye do what I say; but when ye do not what I say, ye have no promise." Let us try the Lord.

They who obey the laws of life are joyful; they are freed from fear, the ugly destroyer of peace. The Lord so spoke in the revelation of December, 1830:

And Israel shall be saved in mine own due time; and by the keys which I have given shall they be led, and no more be confounded at all. Lift up your hearts and be glad, your redemption draweth nigh. Fear not, little flock, the kingdom is yours until I come.

Brethren and sisters, let us live for such a blessing. May we use, with our might, the simple, beautiful, life-giving doctrines of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Then, all will be well with us. The

future of the work in the European lands looks promising, indeed. For that, also, let us give praise.

May the Lord bless you all.

Christmas, 1930.

JOHN A. WIDTSOE

LEAH D. WIDTSOE

THE GIFT OF GIFTS

(Concluded from page 887)

His sharp black eyes gleamed with pride. He missed the approach of no man to the House of God and saw all else but the reticent Herodia. His sons were glorying in their coveted positions. He was so intensely interested that he gave no thought of her, until Solomus addressed him. "Father, my money is gone, and Herodia has not yet opened her bag."

Aristobolus lowered his trumpet and looked down at his daughter. The smile that covered his face was slowly superseded by an angry gleam. Herodia seemed to have forgotten her father. Her worshipful eyes were turned upon the countenance of another man, and he, Jesus of Nazareth.

Until now, Aristobolus had enjoyed the proximity of Jesus. He had gloated in his heart when he saw him approaching the Temple gate, and compared the few who were following the Nazarene with the many crowded around himself. He enjoyed his position until he saw his daughter's face. Furiously angry, he grasped her arm and turned her to face him. His words, when he spoke, snapped with vehemence.

"Herodia, give thine alms and cease thy pernicious gazing at that Nazarene. Give thine alms, I say, before him now. Defy him as thy father dost defy him."

Herodia trembled as she heard the hate leap into her father's voice and felt his angry grip upon her arm. She made no answer to his remark.

"Give thine alms, I say." His voice was threatening.

She held the silken bag before him, empty. He glanced at it and down at her. Caiaphas stood near gazing intently upon the pair, and Aristobolus felt his curious gaze.

"What dost thou mean by this? Where are thy shekels?" he demanded.

Crouching fearfully against the gate, she tightened her hold upon the bag, and gazed pleadingly into her father's stern face. "I gave the shekels in secret," she answered slowly, "because I believe the Nazarene is right."

For an instant a dense silence enveloped the group gathered near the Rabbi. The father's face became ghastly pale. To be disobeyed by a child of his and before Caiaphas, the High Priest, was more than he could bear. A crazed anger seized him. He raised the trumpet above his head as though it were a club. In

another instant it would have crashed heavily upon the head of his beloved daughter, had not Aretas leaped in time to tear it from his grasp.

“Thou shall not kill her! She is mine! She is mine!”

Aretas threw the trumpet from him, and bravely met the frenzied Aristobolus. The latter seemed to have gone mad. He grasped Herodia and shook her violently until she cried aloud with pain.

Aretas hung on to his arm in a vain effort to loosen his hold, to lessen his frenzied strength.

The Rabbi suddenly ceased his work. His madness left as quickly as it had come. Loosening his grasp on the girl's shoulder, he shrank back horrified from her ghastly face, and a groan escaped his lips. “Herodia! Herodia!” Her body lay limp before him, and he buried his face in his hands.

The silence which followed was broken only by Herodia's groans and Aretas' tender calls to her.

Suddenly the ringing voice of Jesus penetrated the heart of every listener: “Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them. Otherwise thou hast no reward of thy Father which is in Heaven. Give thine alms in secret that thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Herodia, because of thy belief in me, I shall reward thee openly.”

He gently touched her shining hair with his hands and softly said: “May thy body be whole to glorify thy Father which is in Heaven.”

The agony vanished from Herodia's face. She held Aretas' hand, and he raised her to her feet. Her twisted back straightened; her body swayed with the grace of a reed; she stepped lightly, firmly, and cried aloud with joy.

Then sinking beside Aretas' kneeling form, for he had grasped the hem of Jesus' robe and was kissing it, she pressed it to her own red lips.

In another moment Jesus had entered the Temple, leaving them there to marvel over his strange, glorious power. When they rose and looked happily about them, they saw the once haughty Aristobolus stooped upon the ground, reverently kissing the prints of Jesus' feet.—Prize Christmas story, *Deseret News*, December 21st, 1929.

CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

J. M. SJODAHL

GLORY be to God in the highest,
And on earth, peace,
Good will toward men.

—Luke 2: 14.

For more than nineteen centuries, the strains of this indescribably beautiful anthem, which heavenly hosts sang when announce-

ing the coming of the Prince of Peace to this earth—His own world—have been repeated by children of men, in song and story, in prayer and oratory, wherever the blessed name of Jesus is known and revered.

But peace has not yet come to this world as a whole. The forces that opened war in heaven, and were cast out, are still a controlling influence in the affairs of this sphere.

After four years of the most savage warfare of history, in which blood was shed by all the instruments ingenuity and scientific application could devise, a cry of agony arose from the very heart of mankind, for peace. The eminent statesmen gathered at Versailles heard it and tried according to the best wisdom they had, to banish war from the earth, as Lucifer had been hurled from his place in heaven. But their plan, though well-considered and practical as a beginning, was almost overwhelmed in an avalanche of narrow-visioned national greed and partisan selfishness. The result is that we are still spending billions on armies and navies and war paraphernalia. Crime, like a tidal wave, is rolling over the face of the earth. Anarchy is rampant in many countries. Race hatred, a kind of spiritual intoxication, clouds the better judgment in the very councils of the nations. Men's hearts, in many instances, are, literally, failing them "for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." (Luke 21: 26.)

What is the cause of it all?

There is but one answer to that question, but that is all-comprehensive: *Men are trying to get along without God.*

Speaking for the Christian world, we are, in fact if not in theory, rejecting revelation, both ancient and modern. Refined infidelity occupies many pulpits and dominates, very largely, our schools and institutes of learning. Scientific theories, destructive of faith in God as He is revealed in His Word, is offered instead of religion. The training of the youth in this world is toward disbelief, and no falsely so-called philosophy, no system of ethics, no amount of psychology, can take the place of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a foundation for the human society.

As Latter-day Saints, we have been led to look for the conditions we now see around us. But we are not discouraged. The foundations for the kingdom of God are firmly laid, and they will remain.

Our duty is clear. It is to win the world for the Prince of Peace, with the Gospel of peace. It is our special duty to teach the children the principles of the Gospel, including obedience to parents, reverence for mature wisdom, kindness, humility, and all the "fruits of the Spirit." (Gal. 5: 22-26.)

In the meantime, we know that the Lord rules, notwithstanding the apparent power of the adversary. The time for His second coming is drawing near. And therefore we joyfully greet

each other at this time of joy. Peace and redemption will come. In the words of the poet :

These are thy gifts, All-potent King,
 And these the blessings of thy sway ;
 So bells may peal and carols ring,
 And hearts rejoice on Christmas day,
 Nor shall the angel-music cease
 From heaven to earth—Good will and Peace.

CHRISTMAS TREE

GEORGE B. KIRBY

THE Christmas Tree custom, so far as Christianity is concerned, is German in its origin, and is identified with the labours of St. Maternus, one of the earliest if not the very first of the preachers of the Gospel among the Teutons.

Just how that people became latter day sponsors for the Christmas tree is doubtful, though possibly it is traceable to the festival of Saturn which began December 17th, and may have been imported into Germany by some of the conquering legions. The Germans have a legend of St. Maternus sleeping beneath a fir tree, and of a miracle that occurred upon that occasion.

There is another theory that the notion of this tree came from Egypt. The palen tree is supposed to put forth a shoot every month, and a spray of this tree, with twelve shoots on it, was used in Egypt at their winter solstice celebration as being symbolical of the ended year. The Germans attribute the actual institution of the fir tree as part of the Christmas celebration to Martin Luther, but there is no reliable information on this subject. The Dutch, especially in New Amsterdam, were responsible for the vogue which the tree gained in America. In England it was entirely unknown until the marriage of Queen Victoria to Prince Albert, who introduced into his adopted country the custom known in every German household.

DATE OF CHRIST'S BIRTH

THERE has been much controversy over the date of Christ's birth. About 532 A.D., Dionysius Exiguus established the Saviour's birth as an event marking a time from which chronological data should be calculated, fixing the date as B.C. 1. Later Biblical scholars have not agreed with the Dionysian system. However, this date is supported by revelation to Joseph Smith, as shown in Section 20 of the Doctrine and Covenants. The Book of Mormon record, wherein Lehi prophesies the Messiah's birth

as 600 years from his departure from Jerusalem, also adds weight to the Dionysian calculations. Many Biblical scholars have reckoned that December 25th could not have been the month and day, but that it was in the spring of the year. It was April 6th according to modern revelation.

BIRMINGHAM DISTRICT CONFERENCE

THE three sessions of the Birmingham District Fall Conference, held in the Handsworth Chapel, Birmingham, on Sunday, December 7th, were marked with an abundance of the divine power which God bestows upon those who are endeavouring to serve Him. The meetings were well attended.

Members of the District effectively recounted the origin and progress of the Church auxiliary organizations at the morning session. In the separate assemblies of the Priesthood members and Relief Society sisters, worthy counsel and instruction were received from Mission President and Sister A. William Lund.

President Virgil J. Smith was released at the afternoon meeting, Elder Kenneth C. Chatwin being sustained in his place to preside over the District. Members and friends in attendance showed considerable interest in the health truths of the Gospel which were portrayed in pageant form by the members of the Kidderminster Branch.

During the final gathering in the evening, several traveling Elders convincingly bore witness to the Lord's spoken word. President Lund then discoursed on the written word of the prophets, closing with an impassioned plea for all to keep God's commandments, and thus become fit members of His kingdom. Members and friends alike were highly impressed with the Spirit manifest in the closing address. More than two hundred and seventy souls returned home with renewed determination to live better lives.

The Fall Conference was preceded by an elimination contest among the auxiliary units of the District, revealing considerable talent.

The following authorities and missionaries were present: President and Sister A. William Lund, Sisters Gwendolyn and Ruth Lund, Brother George Lund, and Elders Rulon T. Jeffs and Wesley D. Amott, all of the British Mission Office; President Virgil J. Smith (released), President Kenneth C. Chatwin, and Elders Ivan E. Lauper, Orrin W. Astle, James B. Harvey, B. Glen Marble, Arthur S. Gailey, C. Lewis Kinsey, Lyman D. Rees, Elwood A. Gee, Cyrus W. Greaves, Leo E. Bevan, Sidney G. Atkin, Wayne B. Lake, O. Horton Transtrum and W. Lamar Phillips, all of the Birmingham District; President Therald N. Jensen, and Elders Weldon C. Roberts and Ural H. Sheppick,

of the Sheffield District; Elders Clarence H. Taylor, Colin M. Edwards, Leo V. Toombs and Joseph R. Greenhalgh, of the Newcastle District; Elders D. Ross Urie, John W. Adams and Paul B. Larsen, of the London District; Elders Lester H. Belliston and Merlin P. Hamilton, of the Bristol District; Elder Owen E. Andrus, of the Nottingham District; and Elder August J. Bodily, of the Leeds District.

ELDER IVAN E. LAUPER, District Clerk.

CHRISTMAS HERITAGE

LIKE wild rose petals strewn across the sky,
 The clouds were scattered as the sun went down
 On Bethlehem. The tramp of many feet
 Woke unaccustomed echoes through the town
 Long silenced to the stately tread of kings.
 The lights flared up in every gay bazaar,
 And all the city was so overfilled
 That one frail stranger coming from afar
 Found shelter in a stable on those hills
 Where Ruth once met the dawn with love-lit eyes,
 And David sang, to place her holy child
 Beneath the star that crowned the eastern skies.

To-night the winds caress the Christmas hills.
 Snowflakes, like cherry-blossom petals fall
 In benediction on the city streets
 Where children play, and merry voices call.
 Pine and holly! Laughter and delight!
 Lights that merge into a single flame.
 Warm abundance for the strangers share
 All given joyously in Jesus' name.
 This is the heritage of Christian faith—
 Gifts symbolize God's gift supreme to men
 As on this night a million voices chant
 That same sweet song the shepherds heard, again.

EDITH CHERRINGTON

BRITISH MISSION ADDRESS: A. WILLIAM LUND, PRESIDENT, 23 BOOTH STREET, HANDSWORTH, BIRMINGHAM

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